

21 July 1974

Dear Harold:

This is to let you know that we are going to have to reduce our activity here at this end somewhat, to explain why, and to outline how it may affect what we are able to do to help you -- by actually rather little, we hope and expect.

As you probably have sensed, for a long time we have divided the work between us in such a way that I, whose eyes tire more easily, have dealt with the largely physical problems of clipping all papers and getting the material in shape for filing. The STM then subjects this culled material to her eagle eye and makes notes for what is a sort of chronological index. She looks particularly for hidden or belatedly-disclosed dates such as the dates Haldeman was in Washington since leaving the government, the reason being that such visits usually precede or otherwise coincide with other important developments. That's just one example.

This method worked fairly well as long as WG was not being reported at all well, simply because there was so little to work with. Since the time of the Saturday Night Massacre, however, the volume of published material has increased enormously, and has reached such proportions that two or three times as many people could work full time at it and still not do the job. Consequently, she has been badly behind in her end of the operation for a long time and has been submerged by one avalanche after another no matter how hard she works.

The upshot was that a stomach ulcer she developed 20 years ago when we were being keelhaunched from one shift to another sprang back into life eight days ago and really knocked her out for a while. Severe nausea and vomiting at first, and she spent four days either sleeping or dozing before the nausea slacked off. She went back on her old bland diet and for the last three days has felt increasingly better. If she can avoid the intense strain and frustration which beset her for so long, it looks like she'll soon be okay and gradually can return to a normal diet.

However, the important thing is to eliminate what we can of the strain and frustration, and for this reason she is dropping her detailed chronology (as of June 17, two years after the breakin) and will content herself (!) with collecting the NY Times daily news index plus what notes it appears absolutely necessary to make. This means we shall have much less precise recall of filed material and will have to do far more day-to-day reading of back files when we want to look up anything. In the meantime we shall read and make mental notes, and in particular be able to read and absorb more as we go along, we hope.

We shall continue to scan the NYTimes, especially, with you in mind, and I imagine should be able to continue to protect you in that quarter much as we have been doing. As you know, we have been sending less from the Times for the reason that all papers are doing a better job of reporting now than they once did and it is not often that the Times has anything which the Post does not. As for the Post, our current subscription expires Aug. 26, and we have not yet made up our mind whether to let it lapse. Probably not, as we seem to be heading into a period where the Post is likely to be more valuable rather than less.

I should mention, too, that one of the sources of the STM's frustration was that, of necessity, in order to keep her head above water, she has had to deal with some periods very lightly and in some cases not at all, all because of new avalanches which came pouring in and simply had to be handled. What this means as far as you are concerned is that we shall be less able to answer promptly when you need something from the back files. We'll continue to do our best, but that may in some cases turn out to be little or nothing. In any case, we are going to try to keep our daily grind down to less unmanageable proportions in order to eliminate strain and the constant feeling ~~of~~ of being hopelessly overwhelmed. You will understand immediately, I'm sure, when I tell you that we have not taken even a day off since I retired more than 18 months ago, and will not need to be told why. The point is, the ~~frustrating~~ feeling of this state of affairs has got to be reduced, and we hope to reduce it without abandoning more than necessary of what we have been trying to do.

In a sense, the whole WG picture has become somewhat easier to deal with since the House Judiciary Committee has got going. This is because the papers are reporting all angles of the story much more fully (although not necessarily better) than they did before, and this is because of the ingrained habit of the American press which prevents it accepting anything as an established fact unless some brass-bottomed official can be located to say it's so. Not only are official proceedings becoming a matter of public record which safely can be reported, officials have been forced into positions where they cannot avoid talking, and all of this is safe copy from the standpoint of the cowardly editor or the lazy reporter or even the business-minded publisher. It's another avalanche, of course, but the metal is a bit more easily separated from the tailings.

Anyway, we shall proceed into the immediate future with our eye on the ball, our ear to the ground (one on each side of the fence, natch) and with one hand on the Gelusil. In other words, we're still with you.

Best,



jdw